

Second Baptist Church Houston

Statement on Sexual Abuse

Second Baptist Church wants to assure the Southern Baptist Convention and our community that we have long adhered to strict policies and guidelines dealing with sexual conduct and abuse.

First and foremost, we grieve with each and every child, individual, their families and everyone affected by sexual abuse. Period. We pray and will continue to pray for anyone, and everyone affected by the gutless and heart wrenching actions of sex abusers and predators. We are thankful for all law enforcement agencies that put their lives on the line each day to bring sexual abuse offenders and predators to justice.

Second Baptist constantly strives to utilize the resources God has given our church family to implement and maintain effective systems, policies and procedures to prevent sexual abuse, to minister to anyone affected by sexual abuse, and to provide a safe environment for children, youth and their families. These policies and practices are subject to periodic review as we constantly strive for improvement in this critical area.

The following information describes current policies and procedures at Second Baptist:

Ensuring a Safe Environment

1. Background Checks

Second Baptist has been conducting mandatory background checks on all staff since 1994. In 2001 we began conducting mandatory background checks on all church volunteers working with children and youth (birth-12th grade). Second Baptist Church conducted 2,059 background checks on staff and volunteers in 2018 before they were hired or permitted to volunteer at any of our church campuses. Specifically, each background check consists of the following:

- **Employee Background Checks:**
 - o Social Security Number Trace
 - o Multi-Jurisdictional Criminal Records search includes sex offender registry
 - o Civil Check (lawsuits)
 - o Credit History

- **Volunteer Background Checks:**
 - o Social Security Number Trace
 - o Multi-Jurisdictional Criminal Records search including sex offender registry

2. New Employee Training

Every new employee is required to go through two full days of new employee training. We have a dedicated section of training dealing with protecting our church family. A Second Baptist security official meets with new employees to set high expectations and emphasize that we enforce a zero-tolerance policy for illegal or inappropriate activity of any kind.

This section of training includes:

- Definition of abuse:
 - o Physical
 - o Sexual
 - o Emotional
- Abuse Reporting Requirements by Law
 - o Failure to Report within 48 hours is a criminal offense
 - o NO privileged communication regarding child abuse
 - o How to report possible child abuse at Second Baptist Church to law enforcement

3. Video cameras

Second Baptist also has numerous video cameras positioned in all nursery areas to assist with security at each of our six campuses to help maintain safe spaces.

4. Employee Manual

Prior to beginning work, every new employee is required to read our Church Employee Manual and sign it, acknowledging they have read and understand the policies of our church. Specifically, Section 2.2 reads,

Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited. *Sexual harassment is prohibited by Second's Equal Employment Opportunity/Non-Discrimination policy and state and federal law.*

Second will not tolerate sexual harassment by any person who is associated with (including, but not limited to, Second's agents, volunteers, consultants, members, or guests) or employed by Second. Sexual harassment, as defined in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") Guidelines, is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

The Manual instructs all employees how to report any and all claims of sexual harassment and states, "The policy of Second is to investigate each complaint of discrimination, harassment or retaliation promptly."

5. Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

In 2017, Second Baptist began conducting a full-day sexual abuse awareness training for all staff working with nursery babies, children, youth and school students. This training includes:

- Zero tolerance for abuse
- Reporting allegations or suspicions to law enforcement
- Understanding characteristics of sexual abusers
- Understanding behaviors in "grooming" a child for sexual abuse
- Understanding how a child is selected for abuse by the groomer
- Avoiding one on one situations
- Looking for physical barriers that impede views of gatekeepers
- Explaining proper and improper physical contact
- Explaining inappropriate communications

This sexual abuse awareness training helps our coworkers screen for potential predatory intent or behavior and strives to minimize any opportunity for sexual abuse.

6. Pastoral Ordination Process

Second Baptist conducts due diligence on each candidate nominated for ordination. Each Campus Pastor asks for recommendations from division heads. If approved, the Campus Pastor recommends the nominations to the Executive Staff who affirms or denies the nomination. Those nominated are required to participate in the below course prior to being voted on for ordination:

- Weekly classroom meetings for 4-5 months (approx. 45-50 total hours). These meetings cover an array of topics and curriculum designed to equip each pastoral nominee with the knowledge and skills needed for a pastoral position.
- Required Readings
 - o “A Grace Disguised”
 - o “Dangerous Calling”
 - o “The Ten Commandments of Marriage”
 - o “Crisis and Trauma Counseling”
 - o “Christ Centered Preaching”
 - o “Leading from the Second Chair”
- Research or Response Papers
 - o Written Testimony
 - o Written Call to Ministry
 - o 2-page Response Papers to “A Grace Disguised” and “Dangerous Calling”
 - o 6-8-page Research Paper on an assigned doctrinal issue
- Ordination Council

The Council is a setting where the pastoral nominee goes before approximately 70 ordained pastors who pose questions to the nominee in order to affirm his call to ministry.
- Ordination Vote

Purpose of Stated Policies, Systems and Procedures

The above policies, systems and procedures have been and are in place to do everything we can to ensure each person that sets foot on any of our campuses is safe from sexual predators. We will be the first to admit that Second Baptist is far from a perfect church. However, we feel these policies, systems and procedures are effective means of guarding the safety of those that are a part of our ministry.

We grieve over every hurting individual that walks through the doors of our church, including sexual abuse victims, and will continue to do everything we can to minister to every child, adult and family in need.

Ministering to those Affected by Sexual Abuse

In addition to our efforts to prevent sexual abuse of any kind on our campuses, we realize tens of thousands of people of all ages regularly visit Second Baptist and some of them have experienced some form of sexual abuse and we want to lovingly and professionally offer meaningful care for them.

1. Counseling Center

Second Baptist has a counseling center that is free for church and bible study members who regularly attend our services. This counseling center consists of 11 licensed Christian Counselors, including eight counselors trained in advanced trauma counseling, two EMDR certified counselors – an intervention specifically designed for trauma treatment and used widely for those who have suffered from sexual or physical abuse, and one counselor whose entire practice is devoted to those suffering from a variety of sexual traumas.

We communicate the availability of these counseling resources through printed materials visible at all campuses as well as through our staff and adult volunteers so that they can provide this information to someone in need of help.

2. Minister on Call (“MOC”)

Each of our six campuses has a minister on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Each MOC is trained on how to handle phone calls and walk-up meetings with those who are suffering from a multitude of situations, including victims of abuse, sexual or otherwise. We also have these hotlines available as a resource:

- Abused Women
 - Houston Area Women’s Center (713) 528-2121
 - Adolescent and Family Counseling (713) 528-6798
- American Association of Christian Counselors, AACC.net (800) 526-8673

- A Lighthouse with Healthcare Solutions (866) 890-CARE (2273) www.lighthousesolutions.us – Provide referrals to Christian crisis services
- Houston Area Women’s Center (713) 528-2121 or (713) 528-6798 (for adolescent and family counseling)
- Houston Area Council on Recovery Addiction (713) 942-4111, www.Councilonrecovery.org 303 Jackson Hill St., Houston, TX
- Memorial Hermann mental health Crisis Clinic (713) 338-6422 Spring Branch, Meyerland, Humble -Care for insured and uninsured Monday-Friday 10pm-8am (hours set for non-traditional access)
- National Suicide Hotline (800) 273-8255
- Psychiatric Care
 - Ben Taub Psychiatric ER (713) 970-7070
 - Cypress Creek Hospital (281) 586-7600
 - Harris County Psychiatric Center (713) 741-5000
 - West Oaks (713) 995-0909

Security and safety on our campuses require a team effort and while we are committed to providing the necessary training, personnel and resources to make Second Baptist a safe environment, we invite all of our guests and members to report any signs of suspicious or inappropriate behavior. We are fully committed to take any and all such reports seriously. Thank you.